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GROWTH INDUSTRY

Portsmouth landscaper started young, continues to grow business.

By James A. Johnson

Gairad DeCastro began doing yard work when he was in high school and quickly fell in love with the green industry.

"My first vehicle was a dump truck that I drove to school," said the 2007 graduate of Portsmouth High School. "I would do my class work, get out on work release. I would be let go early to go to work."

He began mowing lawns with a friend and took some classes to learn more about the industry.

Now, at 23 years old, he owns DeCastro Landscaping in Portsmouth, a thriving business that employs 14 people.

Most of his work involves maintenance on upscale homes in the area, but he also does landscape and hardscape designs, which includes gardens, patios and outdoor pools.

"We offer the full-service spectrum," DeCastro said. "When a customer is going into a home, we can design and install everything and carry it into a maintenance package. We take care of the property whether it is a waterfront home or a year-round residence."

His work generally involves a full-maintenance package and many of his customers are in the Carnegie Abbey area, he said. Most of his maintenance work is on Aquidneck Island, but he has done landscaping design projects on Cape Cod and in northern Massachusetts.



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Gairad DeCastro, owner and operator of DeCastro Landscaping, is surrounded by annuals in a greenhouse at DeCastro Farms in Portsmouth.

"I absolutely love this work," he said. "It is something different every day. I still do a lot of the design work in consultation with homeowners. When it comes to outdoor living, that's where my heart really is."

One mistake people make when building their home is not planning for the landscaping, he said.

"Planning is number one," DeCastro said. "If you know you are going to be building a home, try to get a plan. Meet with your landscaper ahead of time."

Too often, landscaping is an afterthought, he said. People spend their budget on the house and have little or nothing left for landscaping.

"So plan accordingly, budget accordingly and think about landscaping," he advised. "Don't let that be your last thought as you are wrapping up the house."

DeCastro was born in Taunton, Mass., and his biological father died when he was 7 years old.

Later, his mother married

'I took a liking to the green industry and branched off and started my own separate business.'

GAIRAD DECASTRO

Richard DeCastro, one of the owners of DeCastro Farms in Portsmouth. He adopted her son, who took the DeCastro name.

"I didn't really grow up on the farm, but the first couple of years I was here, I would work in the fields and the greenhouse," Gairad DeCastro said. During summers, he would mow lawns and then in his senior year at Portsmouth High, he got a chance to do a patio project for his father's accountant, Arthur Carrellas of Portsmouth.

"I took a liking to the green industry and branched off and started my own separate business," he said. He recently added two franchises — Mosquito Terminators and Weed Man — to the landscaping business. With all the franchises, he has about 20 employees.

DeCastro said the landscaping part of the business is about as big as he wants it to be and he is putting more effort into the two franchises.

"I don't want to be huge," he said of his business. "I want to be big enough to be able to provide benefits for my employees and their families. I don't want to be so big that I can't still have that relationship with my customers."

James A. Johnson is a staff writer for *The Newport Daily News*.